

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-20 (Canceled).

Claim 21 (Original): A production method for a nonwoven fabric of entangling constituent fibers by continuously jetting pressurized steam along a width direction of a fiber web running in one direction from a plurality of nozzle holes, using a pressurized steam jetting nozzle comprising a tubular nozzle holder having on one end a steam inlet opening to be connected with a pressurized steam supply tube, on another end a steam outlet opening to be connected with a steam discharge tube of an outside and an opening elongating along a longitudinal direction of a lower surface thereof, and a nozzle member disposed detachably on the lower surface of the nozzle holder and having a plurality of nozzle holes formed so as to face the opening, the method comprising steps of:

initially introducing pressurized steam from the steam inlet opening, discharging the pressurized steam from the steam outlet opening to the outside;

measuring a temperature inside the pressurized steam jetting nozzle;

stopping a discharge of the steam by switching a steam outlet path to a drainage eliminating path via a trap at a time the temperature inside the nozzle reaches at a predetermined temperature;

running a fiber web continuously in a state facing the jetting nozzle holes of the nozzle after a stoppage of the discharge of the steam so as to entangle fiber web constituent fibers by the pressurized steam jetted from the jetting nozzle holes; and

vacuuming the steam passing through the fiber web by vacuuming means so as to discharge the same to the outside at an opposite side of the fiber web with respect to the jetting nozzle holes.

Claim 22 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising a step of discharging drainage produced inside the nozzle holder from a drain outlet opening formed in a lower part of the nozzle holder to the outside.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising steps of disposing the nozzle holder inclined upward by a desired angle with its one end part provided as a base end toward another end, and discharging the drainage produced inside the nozzle holder from a drainage outlet opening formed in the one end part to the outside.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising a step of entangling the constituent fibers of the fiber web also from a steam reflecting plate side by reflecting the steam immediately after the steam passes through the fiber web by a steam reflecting plate having a plurality of openings.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising a step of maintaining a temperature of the pressurized steam jetting nozzle at a saturated steam temperature of the steam to be used or higher under a heated atmosphere.

Claim 26 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 25, comprising a step of forming the heated atmosphere by an introduction of hot air.

Claim 27 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising steps of disposing the pressurized steam jetting nozzle so as to face an upper surface of a running fiber web and jetting the pressurized steam toward the upper surface of the fiber web.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising a step of disposing the pressurized steam jetting nozzle so as to face a lower surface of the running fiber web and jetting the pressurized steam toward the lower surface of the fiber web.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising a step of clamping and transporting the fiber web between a porous fiber web supporting and transporting member and a porous pressing and transporting member.

Claim 30 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 29, comprising a step of setting an interval between a steam jetting side end part of a pressurized steam jetting nozzle and the fiber web pressing and transporting member at 0 to 30 mm or less.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 29, comprising a step of reciprocally moving a fiber web supporting and transporting member and the fiber web pressing and transporting member or the pressurized steam jetting nozzle in a direction traversing a fiber web transporting path.

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, comprising steps of temporarily storing the pressurized steam in a steam storage part disposed in a halfway of the pressurized steam supply tube and discharging dusts in the steam stored in the steam storage part to the outside together with condensed liquid, and introducing the pressurized steam passing through the steam storage part to one end of the pressurized steam jetting nozzle.

Claim 33 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 32, comprising a step of producing superheated steam by further heating pressurized supplied steam in the pressurized steam supply tube between the steam storage part and the pressurized steam jetting nozzle.

Claim 34 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 33, wherein steam pressure introduced to the pressurized steam jetting nozzle is 0.1 to 2 MPa, and steam jetted from the pressurized steam jetting nozzle is the superheated steam.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 21, wherein a pre-process for temporarily fixing a shape is conducted prior to a fiber entanglement by jetting the steam.

Claim 36 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 35, wherein the pre-process includes a supply of moisture.

Claim 37 (Original): The production method for a nonwoven fabric according to claim 35, wherein the pre-process includes thermally fusing at least a part of constituent fibers of a fiber web.

Claims 38-57 (Canceled).